MEMOIRS AS A SOURCE OF HISTORY

L. RICE-OXLEY

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MEMOIRS AS A SOURCE OF ENGLISH HISTORY

"We are born to inquire after truth."

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MEMOIRS AS A SOURCE OF ENGLISH HISTORY

THE STANHOPE ESSAY, 1914

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Memoirs as a Source of English History

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to his *Historia Novorum*, the chronicler Eadmer tells us that he was led to write of the events of his own times because of the difficulty which he knew his contemporaries experienced in finding out about the past, and because he held that an account of contemporary affairs would be to the glory of God, and deserving the gratitude of posterity. "Hoc igitur considerato," he says "penes me, statui ea quae sub oculis vidi vel audivi, brevitati studendo, stilo officio commemorare." Some five hundred years later another ecclesiastic, another historian of his own times—Bishop Burnet—says in the preface to his work, "I look on the perfecting of this work . . . as the greatest service I can do both to God and to the world." From the days of Eadmer, and before, to the days of Burnet, and beyond, it has been the aim of many persons to win the approval of Heaven by narrating the truth, and the gratitude of man by telling of events within the sphere of their own experience. In such narrations

the truth is not always so absolute as Heaven would doubtless desire, nor is the matter often such as gains the unqualified gratitude of man. Often writers of contemporary events make many protestations of veracity; we may believe that they have always written with a determination to tell the truth. But imperfections in character and intellect make imperfections in all endeavours; sometimes personal feelings inevitably lend a bias, sometimes memory is defective, sometimes experience is so confined that a one-sided view is taken; time will have exaggerated one event, and belittled another; egotism will creep in and enlarge the importance of the part which the author has played in events—in short, it is just because man is human, because each of the species has a difference, that he cannot tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." However grateful we may be to our forefathers for their legacy of testimony, our gratitude must be tempered with a knowledge of their fallibility, of the incompleteness of their experience, of the necessarily limited range of their outlook. It is the function of this essay to discuss the measure of gratitude which the writer of English history should feel for the memoirs which have come down to us.

THE GROWTH OF MEMOIRS

Eadmer has been mentioned as a historian of his own times; in this respect he is not extraordinary among mediaeval chroniclers, for many writers in those times dealt with affairs of their days in some

way or another, and often they were peculiarly qualified to do so. To us in modern times a monastery implies seclusion and aloofness from the world at large, but in past times, though religious houses were, of course, intended to be apart from the world, their culture forced them into prominence in practical affairs. Monastic historians, seated in a remote scriptorium, would tend to be inaccurate about facts and figures, but those who dwelt in the larger and more frequented houses would have excellent opportunities of acquiring material from the great personages who would call at monasteries in the course of their business and journeyings. Moreover, monks were recognized as the literary class, and it would often happen that one would be appointed from them to act as a reporter at an important council, or as an historiographer of a momentous event. Nevertheless, it can hardly be said that there existed in mediaeval times a class of writings which we would call memoirs as distinct from any other form of historical works.

The tendency of human affairs is towards increasing complexity, and with the growth of knowledge and of curiosity the narration of fact and of thought becomes also more complicated. History is now written in many forms, whereas in the Middle Ages it was an art or pastime, narrow in form, lacking in intensity and variety. In the earlier Middle Ages the chronicle was the medium of history writing, and it contained in it the germ of compiled history, of biography, and of memoirs. There were some definite biographies, such as the *Life of Anselm*, by

Eadmer, and some personal reminiscences such as Giraldus Cambrensis' *De Rebus a se Gestis*, and many chroniclers referred to events of their own day. But it cannot be said that any memoirs proper were written in England in mediaeval times; if any such be found they are rarities and curiosities not expected —the work of some precocious intellect. It was not customary to write personal reminiscences for a personal object—that is to say, for a man's own pleasure or for the interest of a small circle of friends or relations. The writing of history was undertaken to glorify a saint or a religious house, to extol a patron, or support a party; a monk would not waste good sheep-skin for the sake of amusing himself with his own thoughts and affairs. Had a monk, with ideas and feelings unknown to his time, attempted such a thing, we may be sure he would have had to do penance for waste of time and parchment.

Even when knowledge became somewhat secularized the layman was not in an atmosphere productive of memoirs.

In particular, in the days of authority there was but little discrimination made between what a man learnt from some external source, and what he observed for himself; indeed, the former kind of knowledge would be considered the more reliable. In general, the interests of the Genius of History were spread over a vast space of time; entirely incomprehensible to It would be one man's desire to write of his own doings in the infinitesimal moment of time called the Present. Upon the men of the Middle Ages was cast a backward spell so that they regarded

the past rather than the present or the future. They were so conservative that to them history was truly continuous and unchanged: for them there were no hedges in the vast plain of time, their thought wandered wide and browsed in distant ages, not realizing that it had strayed far and was among strange things. To write an account of the world from its creation onwards was a task which did not daunt minds which failed to understand conditions of time and space, and to whom anachronisms and anomalies were unknown critical conceptions.

Memoirs concern the individual, and so could not appear until the individual was emancipated from the community; they could not appear until the individual had leisure and culture, until man had become introspective, interested in the things that are, and critical of his own doings; they could not be written until the individual had his own thoughts and ideas, the capability of expressing them, and the means of recording them. Memoirs did not become a distinct means of expression until after the Renaissance had enabled the individual to "find himself."[1]

[1] In this respect the effects of the Renaissance were somewhat anticipated in France by reason of the superior culture and intelligence possessed by men of action in that country. Perhaps that "amour pour le moi," which has helped to produce in France a long series of memoirs, was a characteristic of the French genius even in the Middle Ages. England has no Joinville or Commines, and in France the memoir seems to have been in a state of evolution earlier than in this country. M. Molinier says (*Manuels de Bibliographie Historique*, vol. iv., p. 1): "Vers le temps où commence la Guerre de Cent Ans, l'historiographie française subit de profondes modifications. Les annales monastiques ont disparu longtemps, l'histoire se fait de plus en plus laique et les grandes chroniques prennent un caractère personnel. Beaucoup sont de vrais mémoires, en dépit de leur apparence d'histories générales."

MEMOIRS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In dealing with a subject which, if fully discussed, would cover several centuries of history and necessitate a knowledge of a vast number of volumes, it would seem advisable to concentrate on a comparatively short period—to examine a part of the subject with a view to finding in it examples and illustrations which may apply to the whole. By the seventeenth century memoirs had evolved in completeness, but it is not until then that they furnish a distinct source of historical knowledge. Even the keeping of a diary or the reviewing of past events implies an amount of culture and of interest in affairs which had not yet permeated society until the age of the Stuarts. Journals and personal histories of the Tudor period are in existence; as early as the reign of Henry VII. Polydore Vergil seems to have based his *Historia Anglica* upon a diary which he had kept of contemporary events, but not until seventeenth-century history is reached do bibliographies contain any considerable references to memoirs and to diaries, which are only memoirs written down from day to day instead of at the end of a longer period of time.[1]

The seventeenth century is in many respects the golden age of memoir-writers, and it will be fair to gauge the value of such writings as a source of history from the contribution which they afford to

[1] Evelyn, in places, refers to his Diary as "these memoirs."

the knowledge of the latter half of that period. Events, chiefly the struggle between King and Parliament, which in a broader aspect was in itself an indication of the awakening interests of the people at large, had aroused mental activity in all classes. Between 1640 and 1646, 25,000 pamphlets on the topics of the day had appeared, in itself an indication of a wide and strenuous interest taken in contemporary occurrences. The interest which the men of that time took in their own doings and in their own situation appears in all their intellectual activity; it is shown in the rise of scientific speculation and experiment in the latter half of the century; it appears, at the other extreme of thought, in poetry. As Ranke said:[1] "Can it not be said of the poetical literature of this time that it represents principally the impression produced by prevailing circumstances?" And the seventeenth century was an age not only conscious of itself, but it was an age of culture and intelligence, producing men of great ability in all spheres of life, and men who were highly literary and cultured, though also men of action. As Ranke again has said:[2] "It marks the literary character of the epoch that men occupied themselves so much and so seriously with contemporary history." Then was an atmosphere in which men of all ranks would be induced to record their thoughts and doings. It would also seem that in the times of which I am speaking it was considered by pious people to be a piece of religious discipline

[1] *History of England*, bk. xv., ch. xii. [2] *Ibid.*

to keep a journal for the recording of daily facts and feelings.[1] One of the diaries of this period, that of Ralph Thoresby, F.R.S., is the result of this belief. The author evidently acted upon the advice given to him by his father, who wrote as follows: "I would have you, in a little book . . . take a little journal of anything remarkable every day, principally as to yourself. . . . I have thought this a good method for one to keep a good, tolerable decorum in actions, etc., because he is to be accountable to himself as well as to God." It was an age, too, in which diaries and memoirs were likely to be fuller and more comprehensive than in modern times, especially when mentioning occurrences of general interest; for the newspaper has had much the same effect upon memoirs as upon letter-writing—it has made them slighter, and has restricted their sphere of comment. In modern times every event of public interest is to be found noticed and discussed in the newspapers; it can be safely assumed that news is the common property of all, and any reflections which we make for our personal interest we indulge in as we read the daily paper, and do not make a note of in our journal. It was otherwise in days when the news-sheet had but recently made its appearance, and was either a fierce organ of one of the parties formed during the Civil Wars, or, later, a bare record of such dull facts as the Court allowed to be made public. News in the seventeenth century was scanty and unreliable. Writes a country gentleman

[1] *Introduction to Diary of Ralph Thoresby.* Edited by Rev. J. Hunter, 1830.

to a friend :[1] "If any newes of consequence fall in your way that is not printed, it will bee very acceptable here, for Mercurius doth abuse us too often." When news, even of the greatest and most important events, was a rare commodity, it would be treasured up in diaries. Memoirs, too, which were written in the retrospective mood which comes upon men towards the close of their lives would tend to be more comprehensive than now, for in past times books were not published dealing with great problems or events immediately they occurred. Sir John Reresby says that he wrote his memoirs "to preserve memorials of some things of use as well as of curiosity, which age as well as want of care to preserve hath near already consumed." His memoirs cover the period 1660-1689, and are concerned with most of the great events which took place during that time. In our day there is certainly a greater "care to preserve" than in the seventeenth century, for the activity of the printing-press has made preservation inevitable; a man need no longer describe important events for the benefit of his family or descendants, for a thousand newspapers and a hundred books will already have given them full information upon topics worthy of memorial.

It has seemed proper, then, to choose the memoirs of the latter half of the seventeenth century from which to give some examples of the way in which that form of writing illustrates history, because it seems that memoirs of that period are more com-

[1] Letter in *Memoirs of the Verney Family*, vol. ii., p. 151.

prehensive and more valuable than in later times, when books and news increased in volume. The value of a thing should be estimated when its worth is most in evidence, rather than when circumstances have lessened its importance.

WHAT ARE MEMOIRS?

It is at times difficult to decide what is, strictly speaking, a memoir, and what is a history proper; at times the problem will arise of "When is a memoir not a memoir?" and the riddle is a hard one to solve. Are, for instance, Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* or Burnet's *History of My Own Times* memoirs or not? It has seemed better to rule both these out of the category, since they do not exactly fit in with the definition given above of a memoir, as personal reminiscences written down with a personal object—that is to say, for the interest or instruction of a man's self or his relations, present or to come. Clarendon's *History* was evidently intended to be at once a public vindication and a source of future history, and so is distinct in kind from his *Life* which was written primarily for the information of his children, and not designed for eventual publicity.[1] The former is history proper, the latter memoirs. Burnet's *History of My Own Times*, though not published till after his death, has evidently a wider purpose than that of memoirs; it is addressed to the "reader" in general, and was written for the use of the world at large.[2] In contra-

[1] *English Historical Review*, vol. xix. [2] *Ibid.*, preface.

distinction may be quoted the motives of three memoir-writers proper, as given by themselves in their works. Sir John Bramston says the purpose of his book is "that posteritie, therefore, I meane my owne descendents, may know somethinge of my father and myself, beside our names in the pedigree or line of descent."[1] Sir John Reresby says his memoirs were written for those "as are curious to know what hath passed in their family, and that please themselves with 'olim meminisse.'"[2] Lastly, the Earl of Ailesbury says of his work: "All this is very irregular, and would not be pardonable in one that would pass for an historian, but I disown that character; I write for my own satisfaction, and let this pass for a sort of diary and nothing else; and it is written without favour or affection on the one hand, and without malice on the other."

The memoir-writers of the latter half of the seventeenth century are a large and a mixed class, ranging in status from the exalted memorialist Queen Mary II., whose confidences are a pathetic sermon on the text, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," to the humble Rev. Ralph Josselin, who deals in such detail as "the price of land, food, cows, and pigs, the wages of servants, the salary of a schoolmaster, the excise duty upon hops." The sum of their works presents a picture of the time, with broad outlines and with details; important events and trivialities are confused together; each particular memoir is

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 4. Published by Camden Society, 1845.
[2] *Memoirs*, p. 2. Edited by J. J. Cartwright, 1875.

like an old picture of a pre-perspective period, with all its features out of proportion, and with detail all the more arresting because it is given undue prominence in the general scheme. Perhaps the best means of determining what light this medley of memoirs throws on the history of the time will be to construct an outline sketch of the period 1660-1702, composing it of characteristic extracts from typical contemporary memoirs.

THE RESTORATION

The Restoration period, with order suddenly arising out of confusion, is fitly opened by the great diarist Evelyn, "a most excellent humoured man . . . and mighty knowing"[1] as Pepys describes him. The doubt and turmoil which was rife between the death of Cromwell and the accession of Charles is described for us in the *Diary* with dramatic brevity:

"*April* 25, 1659.—A wonderful and sudden change in the face of the public: the new protector Richard slighted: several pretenders and parties strive for the government: all anarchy and confusion: Lord have mercy upon us!

"*October* 11.—The army now turned out the parliament. We had now no government in the nation: all in confusion: no magistrate either owned or pretended, but the soldiers and they not agreed.

"*February* 3, 1660.—General Monk came now to London out of Scotland, but no man knew what he would do or declare.

[1] February 20, 1666, *Diary*.

"*February* 11.—Monk . . . convenes the old parliament, for joy whereof were . . . bonfires this night with ringing of bells and universal jubilee."

Pepys, writing on the same day, testifies with more detail to the general jubilation:

"In Cheapside there was a great many bonfires, and Bow bells and all the bells in all the churches as we went home were a-ringing . . . at Strand bridge I could at one time count thirty-one fires. In King Street seven or eight; and all along, burning, and roasting, and drinking for rumps. . . . The butchers at the May Pole in the Strand rang a peal with their knives when they were going to sacrifice their rump."

It was, indeed, suddenly that the Restoration became a certainty. On January 18 Pepys writes: "All the world is at a loss to think what Monk will do"; as late as March 6 he says: "Many think that he [*i.e.*, Monk] is honest, and some or more think him to be a fool that would raise himself, but think that he will undo himself by endeavouring it." But of all the conflicting views and policies Monk's was the most reasonable and remedial, and so found favour. He contrived the election in the spring of 1660 of a free Parliament which decided for the return of the King. Charles and his travel-worn Court crossed gaily from the Hague and landed at Dover on May 25. "So great were the acclamations and numbers of people, that it reached like one street from Dover to Whitehall," says Lady Fanshawe.[1]

[1] *Memoirs of Lady Fanshawe.* Edited by Beatrice Marshall, 1905.

In London Evelyn tells us of "the ways strewed with flowers, the bells ringing, the streets hung with tapestry, fountains running with wine." Lady Fanshawe had accompanied Charles on his wanderings, and she gives us some account of the condition of the Royalist Court, of what it had endured in its exile, which helps us to understand the reaction to licence and pleasure which took place after the Restoration; in particular, she describes the state of the Court in the Scilly Isles and Jersey: "I was set on shore almost dead in the island of Scilly. When we had got to our quarters near the Castle where the Prince lay, I went immediately to bed, which was so vile that my footman ever lay in a better, and we had but three in the whole house. . . . When I waked in the morning I was so cold I knew not what to do, but the daylight discovered that my bed was near swimming with the sea. . . . With this we were destitute of clothes—and meat, and fuel for half the court to serve them a month was not to be had in the whole island. The Council sent for provisions to France which served us, but they were bad, and a little of them; and truly we begged our daily bread of God, for we thought every meal our last. Then after three weeks and odd days we set sail for the isle of Jersey. . . . And now there began great disputes about the Prince, for the Queen would have him to Paris," whereas the Council "were for the most part against his going to France."[1]

[1] *Cf.* Pepys, May 16, 1660: "This afternoon Mr. Edward Pickering told me in what a sad, poor condition for clothes and money the King was, and all his attendants . . . their clothes not being worth 40s. the best of them. And how over-joyed the King

The day after the King's return in the House "there arose a debate that now the King was come, and we having been long humbled and tost upon unlawful foundations, it were prudent to return to our ancient Constitution of Government, and to desire his Majesty that this Convention (which was called the healing Parliament) might be dissolved, and a legal Parliament called . . ."[1] The Convention was allowed to turn itself into a Parliament by its own act.

CHURCH SETTLEMENT

It has been said that there were two Restorations in England: one in 1660 of the Parliament and Monarchy, another in 1661 of the Anglican Church.[2] The latter Restoration agitated the country as much as did the former, and the feelings ran high between those who favoured Episcopacy and those who advocated Presbyterianism. Pepys and Evelyn indicate the situation. The former writes under the date March 20, 1661: "The great talk of the town is the strange election that the City made yesterday for parliament men, viz., Fawke, Love, Jones, and . . . men that, so far from being episcopals, are

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was when Sir J. Greenville brought him some money; so joyful that he called the Princess Royal and Duke of York to look upon it, as it lay in the portmanteau, before it was taken out." And *ibid.*, May 23, 1660: "Upon the quarter-deck he [*i.e.*, Charles] fell into a discourse of his escape from Worcester, where it made me ready to weep to hear the stories he told of his difficulties that he had passed through. . . ."

[1] *Memoirs of Sir George Courthop.* The *Camden Miscellany*, vol. xi., p. 147.

[2] *England under the Stuarts*, p. 332. G. M. Trevelyan.

thought to be Anabaptists; and chosen with a great deal of zeale . . . calling out in the hall, 'No Bishops! no Lord Bishops!' It do make people to fear it may come to worse, by being an example to the country to do the same. And indeed the Bishops are so high, that very few do love them." The same authority tells us that it was the opinion of some that the King would be forced to favour Presbytery for fear of losing the support of the City. Many in the country at large were opposed to the "highness" of Bishops, and must have shared the implied fears of the Rev. Ralph Josselin,[1] who writes on June 23, 1660: "Sd. Bps. and their courts are coming in again, Lord helpe us to walke humbly and wisely." The Cavalier party was determined to have a restoration of the Old Order in its completeness, with Bishops as well as King. Presbyterians were commanded to cease preaching in the middle of August, 1662, unless they read the new Common Prayer. In London there was some disturbance at the "outing" of the Presbyterian ministers; on August 26, 1662, for instance, Pepys tells us that "there hath been a disturbance in Friday Street; a great many people knotting together and crying out 'Porridge!'[2] often and seditiously in the Church, and they took the Common Prayer book, they say, away; and some did tear it." On September 3 he says: "The Bishop of London[3] hath taken good care

[1] Vicar of Earles Colne, 1640–1683. Diary, edited for Royal Historical Society by E. Hockliffe, 1908.

[2] "*Fig.*: A conglomeration, hotchpotch; unsubstantial stuff."—Murray, *New English Dictionary.*

[3] Sheldon.

that places are supplied with very good and able men which is the only thing that will keep all quiet"; and on September 30: "The late outing of the Presbyterian clergy . . . is the greatest piece of State now in discourse. But for ought I see they are gone out very peaceably and the people not so much concerned therein as was expected." Nevertheless, the Clarendon Code had not established uniformity unshakably, and dissent was always a problem and a power. On November 10, 1662, Pepys writes: "The town, I hear, is full of discontents . . . and as far as I can hear will never be contented with episcopacy, they are so cruelly set for presbytery, and the Bishops carry them so high, that they are never likely to gain anything upon them"; and six years later, on March 16, 1669: "We fell to other talk [*i.e.*, Pepys and one Blackburne] and I find by him that the Bishops must certainly fall, and their hierarchy; these people[1] have got so much ground upon the King and Kingdom as is not to be got again from them: and the Bishops do well deserve it."

Charles himself was in favour of toleration, being inclined to Roman Catholicism, but, as Pepys says, the "great question is, whether the Presbyters will be contented to let the Papists have the same liberty of conscience with them, or no, or rather be denied it themselves."[2] In 1672 the Declaration of Indulgence was put forward, and two contemporaries give us what was probably the opinion of the educated class upon the matter. On March 12 writes Evelyn: "To

[1] *I.e.*, the anti-Church party. [2] February 16, 1663.

this succeeded the King's declaration for an universal toleration. . . . This was imputed to the same council, Clifford warping to Rome as was believed, nor was Lord Arlington clear of suspicion. . . . I think there might be some relaxations without the least prejudice to the present Establishment, discreetly limited, but to let go the reins in this manner . . . was a false policy and greatly destructive." And Sir John Reresby says on the same subject: "The King did issue out his proclamation for the indulgence of tender consciences. This made a great stir, not only in succeeding parliaments [where at last it was reversed], but throughout the kingdom, and was the greatest blow that ever was given, since the King's restoration, to the Church of England; all sectaries by this means repairing publicly to their meetings and conventicles, insomuch that all the laws, and care of their execution, against these separatists afterwards, could never bring them back to due conformity."[1]

The opposition to toleration was as strong when James II. issued his Declaration of Indulgence, and it was the more bitter because the intent to favour Roman Catholicism was more avowed than it had been in Charles II.'s time. James's efforts were as unavailing as had been those of his brother, though to achieve his object he spared no pains, as is evident

[1] *Memoirs of Sir John Reresby*, p. 86. Edited by James J. Cartwright, 1875. Sir John Reresby, born 1634, died 1689, was appointed High Sheriff of Yorks 1667. He took his seat as M.P. for Aldborough, Yorks, in 1675. Appointed Governor of Bridlington 1678, Governor of York 1682.

from Sir John Bramston's[1] remarks on the subject in his *Autobiography*,[2] where he says: "His Majesty in pursuance of his designs to take off the penal laws made against Papists, is, and hath been, telling of noses—having lists of all the Nobility and of the Commons in Parliament; and speakes with everyone as they come in his sight, which I confess since I have avoided . . .; but I would put off the evil day as longe as I can, it beinge a hard thinge to deny the Kinge anything; nor would I this if I could yield obedience with a safe conscience." James issued his first Declaration of Indulgence on April 4, 1687. Addresses of thanks were received from the Nonconformists (Bramston quotes in detail those of the Anabaptists, of some Quakers at Westminster, and of some London Presbyterians). But it soon became apparent that now, as in Charles II.'s reign, the Nonconformists were unwilling to have freedom if the price was to be the toleration of Roman Catholicism. One Ralph Thoresby, a Nonconformist who eventually conformed, notes in his Diary: "King James II.'s Declaration of Indulgence gave us ease in this case, and though we dreaded a snake in the grass, we accepted it with due thankfulness."[3]

[1] Created K.B. at coronation of Charles II.; knight of shire for Essex in the pre-Restoration Parliament, twice re-elected; burgess for Maldon after accession of James II.; subsequently retired, and died February 4, 1699–1700.

[2] P. 267.

[3] *Diary of Ralph Thoresby, F.R.S.*, 1677–1724. Edited, in two volumes, by Rev. J. Hunter, 1830. Thoresby was a pious and strenuous antiquary, and a good hater of Popery. With the extravagance of local patriotism he has been called the "Pepys of Yorkshire." His Diary in no way resembles that of Pepys. It is full of accounts of places visited and sermons listened to, of pious

If Rome were the snake in the grass, the fear of it decided the Nonconformists against James. In vain the King issued a second Declaration on April 27, 1688, and ordered it to be read. He remained unsupported by those whose favour his indulgence had sought to gain. The matter culminated, and was decided by the trial and acquittal of the Seven Bishops, of which details are found in Evelyn, Reresby, and Bramston—details which Macaulay worked up into his famous description.

NATIONAL DISCONTENT

In following the Declarations of Indulgence we have been led away from the reign of Charles II. Two years after the joyful triumph from the Hague to London, there was another landing and more rejoicing: this time the occasion was the arrival of Catharine of Braganza. Evelyn writes under May 30, 1662, "The Queen arrived with a train of Portuguese ladies . . . their complexions olivader and sufficiently unagreeable. Her Majesty . . . was yet of the handsomest countenance of all the rest, and, though low of stature, prettily shaped, languishing and excellent eyes, her teeth wronging her mouth by sticking out a little too far; for the rest, lovely enough."[1] But since the rejoicing of 1660, public enthusiasm was becoming qualified by a realization of the character of the restored Court. We find the

laments for time wasted, and for the wickedness of the age. Its minute details become quite wearisome.

[1] An account of the marriage is to be found in Lady Fanshawe's *Memoirs*.

first note of this in Pepys on May 15, 1662, when he says: "At night, all the bells of the toune rung, and bonfires were made for the joy of the Queen's arrival, who landed at Portsmouth last night. But I do not see much true joy, but only an indifferent one in the hearts of the people, who are much discontented at the pride and luxury of the court, and running in debt." A month later he remarks: "This I take to be as bad a juncture as ever I observed. The King and his new Queen minding their pleasures at Hampton Court. All people discontented, some that the King do not gratify them enough; and others, Fanatiques of all sorts, that the King do take away their liberty of conscience; and the height of the Bishops, who I fear will ruin all again." The "sad, vicious, negligent" Court, as Pepys calls it, had a deteriorating effect on the whole public service. Pepys himself tells us fully about the fleet in his day: how the ships and equipment were rotten, and of the miserable condition of the seamen; how the fleet was "in such a condition as to discipline, as if the Devil had commanded it"; how much of the confusion was caused by unruly and ignorant "gentleman-captains"; how the seamen were so badly paid that they were with difficulty prevented from going over to the Dutch; how in general there was "nothing but distraction and confusion in the affairs of the Navy."

In consequence of the decadence of the Court and of the national degradation which resulted from it, men began to think regretfully of the days that were past. We have seen that in religion London was still largely Presbyterian; in politics, too, it was

conservative, and retained pre-Restoration ideas. We are told by Sir John Reresby[1] that "the citizens and common people of London had . . . so far imbibed the customs and manners of a Commonwealth, that they could scarce endure the sight of a gentleman, so that the common salutation to a man well dressed was 'French dog,' or the like." "It is strange," reflects Pepys, "how everybody do nowadays reflect upon Oliver, and commend him, what brave things he did, and made all the neighbour princes fear him; while here a prince come in with all the love and prayers and good-liking of his people . . . has lost all so soon, that it is a miracle what way a man could devise to lose so much in so little time."[2] On February 8, 1666, the same writer notes: "At dinner we talked much of Cromwell; all saying he was a brave fellow . . .;" and on June 3, 1667, after a conversation with Evelyn, he says: ". . . For aught we see, the kingdom is likely to be lost, as well as the reputation of it is, for ever; notwithstanding so much reputation got and preserved by a rebel that went before him" (Charles II.).

CLARENDON

It is not surprising that the man who stood for the old Cavalier party should have been unpopular with the younger generation; it was perhaps inevitable that Clarendon, in spite of his faithful services, should have fallen out of favour during the

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 37. [2] July 12, 1667.

reaction. It is harder to understand why he was so unpopular in the country at a time when the Court was fallen into disfavour by reason of its intemperance. His unpopularity seems, in fact, to afford an example of how superficial is, at times, the judgment of the people. Evelyn and Pepys give us briefly the causes of his fall. The former tells us that he "visited the Lord Chancellor, to whom His Majesty had sent for the seals a few days before; I found him in his bedchamber very sad.[1] The Parliament had accused him, and he had enemies at Court, especially the buffoons and ladies of pleasure, because he thwarted some of them and stood in their way. . . . The truth is he made few friends during his grandeur among the royal sufferers, but advanced the old rebels. He was . . . one who kept up the form and substance of things in the nation with more solemnity than some would have had. . . ." (August 27, 1667). The popular feeling against Clarendon is described under June 14, 1667: "Mr. Hater tells me at noon that some rude people have been, as he hears, at my Lord Chancellor's, where they have cut down the trees before his house, and broke his windows, and a gibbet either set up before or painted up on his gate, and these three words writ: 'Three sights to be seen: Dunkirke, Tangier, and a barren Queene.'" The two diarists give details of the proceedings against the Chancellor and of his fall. Perhaps the Court attitude towards

[1] Pepys says: "They say he takes it [*i.e.*, his fall] very contentedly"—an example of the unreliability of hearsay evidence.

Clarendon, and his lonely, rather heroic position after the Restoration, is best summed up in a tale which Pepys tells; how, "as soon as Secretary Morrice brought the Great Seale from my Lord Chancellor, Bab. May fell upon his knees, and catched the King about the legs, and joyed him, and said that this was the first time that ever he could call him King of England, being freed from this great man."

CHARACTER-SKETCHES IN MEMOIRS: CHARLES II.

Bishop Burnet was of the opinion that "nothing guides one's judgment more truly in a relation of matters of fact than the knowing the temper and principles of the chief actors,"[1] and, though it comes from the lips of an unhistorically-minded person, there is truth in the saying of Dr. Johnson that "we cannot trust to the characters we find in history, unless when they are drawn by those who knew the persons."[2] The chief memoir-writers of the latter half of the seventeenth century were men who had been about the Court, who were at one time or another engaged in public affairs, and who had opportunity of meeting and knowing the considerable personages of the times. Evelyn was allowed to converse with Charles II. on many occasions, and was with him under various circumstances. At one time, to take two instances from many which might be given: "His Majesty was pleased to discourse"

[1] *History of His Own Times*, preface.
[2] Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, vol. i., p. 386. Published Oxford, 1904.

with him "concerning several particulars relating to our Society,[1] and the planet Saturn, etc., as he sate at supper in the withdrawing-room to his bed-chamber."[2] At another time Evelyn "walked with him [*i.e.*, Charles] through St. James' Park to the garden, where I both saw and heard a very familiar discourse between . . .[3] and Mrs. Nelly, as they called an impudent comedian, she looking out of her garden upon a terrace at the top of a wall, and . . . standing on the green walk under it. I was heartily sorry at this scene," he continues, "thence the King walked to the Duchess of Cleveland, another lady of pleasure and the curse of our nation."[4] We may, then, take as a fair estimate the character which Evelyn gives of Charles II.: "Thus died King Charles II., of a vigorous and robust constitution, and in all appearance promising a long life. He was a prince of many virtues, and many great imperfections; debonair, easy of access, not bloody nor cruel; his countenance fierce, his voice great, proper of person, every motion became him; a lover of the sea, and skilful in shipping; not affecting other studies, yet he had a laboratory, and knew of many empirical medicines, and the easier mechanical mathematics; he loved planting and building, and brought in a politer way of living, which passed to

[1] *I.e.*, the Royal Society. Founded 1660. Incorporated as the Royal Society, 1662.

[2] May 14, 1661.

[3] Evelyn, though he was not blind to the faults of the Monarchy, was a strong Royalist. Perhaps his loyalty restrained him from putting the King's name to the undignified context.

[4] March 1, 1671.

luxury and intolerable expense. He had a particular talent in telling a story. . . . He would doubtless have been an excellent prince, had he been less addicted to women, who made him uneasy, and always in want to supply their unmeasurable profusion, to the detriment of many indigent persons who had signally served both him and his father. He frequently and easily changed favourites to his great prejudice." Josselin remarks on this last failing with expressive brevity, describing Charles as "a good-natured prince but sadly yoked with followers."[1] But this fickleness was not due to ignorance of human nature, as the Earl of Ailesbury observed: "The good king . . . knew men better than any that hath reigned over us, and when he gave himself time to think, no man ever judged better of men and things."[2]

Evelyn was a virtuoso, and had in common with Charles an interest in science. Pepys, though it may be said that he had in common with the King a love of pleasure, was a Civil servant, a man of business; it is, in consequence, the unfavourable side of the royal character which strikes him chiefly. For example, "After dinner I went up to Sir

[1] Diary, p. 143.

[2] *Memoirs of Thomas, Earl of Ailesbury*, p. 20. Published Roxburghe Club, 1895. Thomas Bruce, Earl of Ailesbury, was born in 1655. He became M.P. for Marlborough 1679–1681, M.P. for the county of Wiltshire 1685–1686, Page of Honour to James II. at his coronation, Gentleman of the Bedchamber 1685–1688, Lord-Lieutenant of the counties of Bedford and Huntingdon 1685–1688. As will be seen later, he was a devoted follower of James II., but a man of too much common sense and too large a mind to be a blind adherent.

Thomas Crewe . . . and there I sat talking with him all the afternoon upon the unhappy posture of things at this time; that the King do mind nothing but pleasures, and hates the very sight or thoughts of business; that my Lady Castlemaine rules him. . . ."[1]

MONK

In diaries and memoirs, which by their nature are not much meditated or carefully elaborated, we cannot expect to find many characters drawn at length. It is usually a brief sentence or an account of some incident which gives us indirectly a view of people as they were. Pepys sums up Monk's character thus: "They [*i.e.*, Parliament] did also vote this day thanks to be given to the Prince and Duke of Albemarle, for their care and conduct in the last year's war, which is a strange act; but, I know not how, the blockhead Albemarle hath strange luck to be loved, though he be, and every man must know it, the heaviest man in the world, but stout and honest to his country."[2] With this we may compare what Ailesbury says:[3] "He [Monk] was naturally of heavy parts and illiterate, having been trained up from tender years in military service, but he supplied that by a good judgment, and secret to the last degree, and most cautious in all his undertakings. . . . He saw all at stake, and his country under the highest tyranny, and he hoped the good

[1] *Diary*, May 15, 1663.
[2] *Ibid.*, October 23, 1667.
[3] *Memoirs*, p. 20.

God would pardon him since his main, and indeed only design was to restore the Lord's Anointed and to rescue his enslaved country."

OATES

Reresby has described an incident which explains the character of Titus Oates as clearly as does an examination of the whole history of the Popish Plot. "I received," says Reresby, "the sacrament at the hands and in the chapel of that excellent man Dr. Gunning, Bishop of Ely. There came and received with us Dr. Oates, the famous evidence of the Popish Plot. We dined together afterwards at the Bishop's table, where the Doctor,[1] blown up with the hopes of running down the Duke,[2] spoke of him and his family after a manner which showed himself both a fool and a knave. He reflected not only on him personally, but upon the Queen his mother, and her present Majesty, till nobody daring to contradict him, for fear of being made a party to the plot, I at last did undertake to do it, and in such a manner that he left the room in some heat. The Bishop told me this was his usual discourse, and that he had checked him formally for taking so indecent a liberty, but he found it was to no purpose."[3]

THE POPISH PLOT

Memoirs, by reason of their personal character, indicate what was public opinion about such an

[1] *I.e.*, Oates, who claimed to be a D.D. of Salamanca.
[2] *I.e.*, of York.
[3] *Memoirs*, p. 196.

event as the Popish Plot. In the perplexities and astonishment of that fearful excitement, well might the Rev. Ralph Josselin exclaim: "Lord, I understand not the secret strings of this business!"[1] The majority of people easily gave credence to the charges against the Papists, and shared the thankfulness of Ralph Thoresby, who notes in his Diary:[2] "All day in, and most of it was reading the Trials of the Popish conspirators. Blessed be God, for disappointing their wicked enterprises!" Oates and his fellows had the advantage of being in the offensive, and, moreover, against a class of persons whom it needed but little encouragement to suspect. Prejudice was carried to such an extent that Ailesbury is able to tell that the Mayor of Hastings said Sir George Wakeman[3] would not be on his trial if he were not guilty. Reresby[4] relates how some persons tried at York for participation in the plot were acquitted, as the evidence of disreputable witnesses did not find such credence as in London. Nor, it seems, did the plot find such acceptance among the higher classes as it did among the less educated. Evelyn, for example, after meeting Oates for the first time, remarks of him: "He seemed to be a bold man, and, in my thoughts, furiously indiscreet."[5] Charles himself, though policy and indolence led him to countenance the general belief in the plot, was too shrewd an observer not to estimate the

[1] Diary, p. 177.
[2] P. 31.
[3] Physician to the Queen: groundlessly accused by Oates of plotting with her to poison the King.
[4] *Memoirs*, p. 186.
[5] October 1, 1678.

evidence at something near its true value. Sir John Reresby gives us proof of this. "Being," he says, "with the King at the Duchess of Portsmouth's lodgings, my Lord Treasurer present, the King told me he did think it some artifice, and did not believe one word of the plot."[1] Writing to the Prince of Orange, the Duke of York said: "I do verily believe that when this affair is thoroughly examined it will be found nothing but malice against the poor Catholics in general, and myself in particular."[2]

PARTIES IN POLITICS

This opinion of the Duke of York's sums up the situation with brief accuracy, and from the time of the supposed plot till the coming of William of Orange political disturbance centred round James and his acceptance of Roman Catholicism. As early as 1673 we find in Evelyn's *Diary* the indication of a coming storm: "I staid to see whether, according to custom, the Duke of York received the Communion with the King; but he did not, to the amazement of everybody. This being the second year he had forborne . . . gave exceeding grief and scandal to the whole nation. . . . What the consequences of this will be, God only knows, and wise men dread."[3] By 1673 the Court and Country parties had been formed, as we learn from Sir John Reresby, whose account is as follows: "The state of that parliament was this at the time: all

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 146, October 23, 1678.
[2] Letter dated October 18, 1678. *Vide* Dalrymple's *Memoirs of Great Britain*, 1773, vol. ii., Appendix, p. 202.
[3] March 30, 1673.

things had been carried on from the time of its being called, which was soon after the King's restoration, with great calm and success for the advantage of the Crown. They had given the King a very great revenue upon tonnage and poundage, the excise upon several sorts of liquors, hearth-money, besides temporary taxes. . . . This began to weigh heavy upon the country, and to make them repine, which stirred up some gentlemen in both Houses to oppose this current, which was called the Country party in opposition to those others whom they called the Court party. The first of these pretended to protect the country from being overburdened in their estates, in their privileges and liberties as Englishmen—to stand by the religion and government as established by law. The other declared for . . . the King to have a sufficient revenue and power for the exercise of his regal authority, without too much depending upon the people, since it had proved of so ill consequence in the example of his father."[1] The Country party, known successively as the Petitioners and Whigs, took up the cause of opposing James's succession to the throne. At one time it came to be the policy of the leaders of this party to bring the Prince of Orange over to England to strengthen the opposition. Of this project we are informed by the Diary of Henry Sidney:[2] "After

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 89, under year 1673.

[2] Edited by R. W. Blencowe, 2 vols., 1843. Henry Sidney, born 1640; was Groom of the Bedchamber to Duke of York, 1665, and a few months later Master of Horse to the Duchess. He was one of the handsomest men of his day, and in character fully down to

dinner my Lord Sunderland and I went to Chelsey, and, coming home, we fell into the discourse of the Prince; and particularly that we thought it would be very good for him and everybody else, for him to come over in October, and take his place at the Council and in the House of Peers; and we thought it would be a great strengthening to our party."[1] There is added an original note to the effect: "I proposed it: the Dukedom of Gloucester a proper title." Later we find: "My Lord Sunderland told Mr. Godolphin of our design of bringing over the Prince, which he approves of extremely, and resolves to further it. . . . I am to let the Prince know that the Earl of Shaftesbury is not of our party, but that he is a good tool to work with, and that there is nothing to be done in Parliament without him."[2] At first the enterprise seemed to be succeeding: "I told him [*i.e.*, the Prince] several reasons why he should go into England; he was unapt to believe it would do any good; but I told him the monarchy was absolutely lost, unless he recovered it. He is convinced the Duke will never have the Crown, and I find would be very willing to be put into a way of having it himself."[3] But William was too wary to

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the standard of indolence and dissoluteness of that time. He caused a serious breach between the Duke and Duchess, and was dismissed from his post. He was appointed Master of the Robes to Charles II., 1675; was elected M.P. for Bramber, and supported the Exclusion Bill. He was instrumental to the Revolution, and was made by William III. successively Privy Councillor, Secretary of State, Governor of Ireland, and Earl of Romney.

[1] P. 4, June 6, 1679. [2] P. 19, June 28.

[3] P. 130, September 4.

accept the project; he pointed out that the juncture was not convenient for his coming over, because, firstly, Parliament would fall on the Duke, who would lay blame on him if he were there; and, secondly, if Parliament were dissolved, the nation would blame him. All he desired, he said, was to be named third heir; he advised the King to agree with Parliament, and for his own part was in favour of a Bill excluding Catholic kings, without names mentioned.[1] The following year William further told Sidney that, as he had no acquaintance and no party in England, he could not imagine what would be the good of his coming over.[2] At this time, as, indeed, in all his life, William was in a difficult position, and he frankly expressed his perplexity to Sidney, who says on March 13, 1681: "I had a great deal of discourse with the Prince about our affairs: he confesses he does not know what to do; that he was never without some project till now."

In the matter of the Exclusion, Charles was complacent up to a certain point: he was content "that something were enacted to pare the nails (to use his own phrase) of a popish successor; but that he would not suffer his brother to be taken away from him, nor the right line of the succession of the Crown to be interrupted."[3] He was somewhat unexpectedly supported by Halifax, who had been a member of the Whig party.

[1] P. 143.
[2] Vol. ii., p. 78, July 4, 1680.
[3] Reresby, p. 149.

HALIFAX

Halifax's speech against the Exclusion Bill is one of the two most dramatic and critical events in the history of the great controversy, the other being Charles's dissolution of the Oxford Parliament. Of the former Reresby writes: "There was a great party in that House[1] for the passing of the Bill; and great speakers, of whom the chief was the Earl of Shaftesbury. The chief manager against it was the Earl of Halifax, which was a great surprise to many, he having gone along with my Lord Shaftesbury and that interest for some years; but this not being agreeable to his judgment, he opposed it vigourously. . . . He made so fine and so powerful a defence, that he alone (for so all confessed) persuaded the House against it; so that after the debate had lasted ten hours, the question being put whether the Bill should pass that House, it was carried in the negative."[2]

SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE

For just this period we have in Sir William Temple[3] a valuable authority for the high and secret

[1] *I.e.*, House of Lords. [2] P. 191.

[3] Memoirs from 1679 to 1681. In *Works*, vol. i., published 1720. Sir W. Temple was introduced to Court in 1661. In 1665, at the time of the Dutch War, he was sent on a difficult embassy to the Prince-Bishop of Munster, who had agreed to attack Holland in return for a subsidy. The Bishop outwitted Temple and cunningly obtained the money and omitted his own part of the bargain. Temple was next sent as an envoy to Brussels, where by dint of speaking the truth, he was able to persuade the Dutch to the Triple Alliance in 1668. He was recalled in 1670, but in 1674 went as Ambassador to the Hague. On the conclusion of the Treaty of

politics involved in the confusion of the Exclusion question. He gives us an explanation of Halifax's conduct, which, whether it be the true one or no, was the one put forward at the time: "At least the Reasoners on this matter could find no other ground for such a change in Lord Halifax's Course." The explanation is this: "Lord Halifax, who saw himself topp'd by Lord Sunderland's Credit and Station at Court, resolved to make this sudden turn of falling in with the King . . . about the Bill of Exclusion, wherein he found the King steady, and that my Lord Sunderland would lose himself: so that falling into confidence with the King upon such a turn, he should be alone Chief in the Ministry without competitor."[1]

It is a rare thing, and, indeed, not to be expected to find in memoirs any theory of the Constitution, but in Temple's *Memoirs* we find a complete account of that curious experiment which was his own device, namely, an enlarged and conciliating Privy Council. "I observed," says Temple, "the parliament grow every day more violent. . . . I saw a Probability of Matters growing to such a Pass, that his Majesty might be forced to part with them; and yet I saw not Authority enough left in the Crown

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Nimeguen he returned to England. He was pressed to become Secretary of State, but refused, as he was anxious to "wind himself out of publick affairs." He tells us himself: "I had learned by living long in Courts and Publick affairs that I was fit to live no longer in either" (*Memoirs*, p. 359). Accordingly, he gladly retired, and thenceforward devoted himself entirely to the cultivation of literature, philosophy, and gardens.

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 354.

either to do that without the venture of great Mischiefs, or to live without another Parliament until the present Humours might cool. And both these Considerations meeting together, cast me upon the Thoughts of the King's establishing a new Council."[1] The Council was to conciliate Parliament and make the King powerful to resist it. To do this it was to be composed of the men of "most appearing Credit and Sway in both Houses." It was to be an assembly of rich men, since "Authority is observed much to follow land," and in order that it might "upon a pinch furnish the King so far as to relieve some great necessity of the Crown." "His Majesty," the author of this wily but futile expedient proceeds—"His Majesty seemed much satisfied with the thing." And Lord Chancellor Finch exclaimed that "it looked like a thing from Heaven fallen into His Majesty's Breast."[2] But Sir William did not fathom His Majesty's duplicity and secretly-cherished autocratic ideas. "God's Fish!" said His Majesty to the Earl of Ailesbury, "they have put a set of men about me, but they shall know nothing."[3]

THE OXFORD PARLIAMENT

In the spring of 1681 the second dramatic event occurred in the troubled politics of those exciting days. Parliament met in Oxford, and there the Commons were determined to pass a Bill disabling the Duke of York from inheriting the Crown. But

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 333.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 334.
[3] Ailesbury's *Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 36.

Charles was firm in his adherence to the succession, and suddenly, without warning, dissolved the Parliament. "I was witness," says the Earl of Ailesbury, "of the dreadful faces of the members, and the loud sighs. I went up the House to attend the King at the putting off his robes, and with a most pleasing and cheerful countenance he touched me on the shoulder with this expression: 'I am now a better man than you were a quarter of an hour since: you had better have one king than five hundred.'"[1]

But the Exclusion cause was by no means suppressed by this blow. Shaftesbury was imprisoned, but the Bill against him was thrown out by a Grand Jury amid rejoicing. On March 17, 1682, Reresby tells us that Halifax had told him that he had written to the Duke of York "that except he became a Protestant, his friends would be obliged to leave him, like a garrison that one could no longer defend."

ACCESSION OF JAMES II.

But immediate trouble was staved off by strong measures—by not calling a Parliament, and by suppressing Town Charters. Moreover, a reaction was caused by the Rye House plot, and upon Charles's death James ascended the throne peaceably, and was greeted by his first Parliament with loyal enthusiasm. Charles was "very obscurely buried in a vault under Henry the Seventh's Chapel at Westminster, without any manner of pomp, and

[1] Ailesbury's *Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 57.

soon forgotten after all this vanity, and the face of the whole Court was exceedingly changed into a more solemn and moral behaviour."[1] But the new King was firm and sincere in his old principles, and soon lost his popularity by forcing on measures to relieve the Roman Catholics from their penalties, and himself from the hindrance and limitation of the Constitution and its laws. In Evelyn, Reresby, and Bramston, though all three were stout and loyal supporters of the Crown, we find *passim* mention of James's unlawful acts—how he encouraged Roman Catholicism, how Papists were given offices and their books allowed to be published, how several judges were dismissed and complying ones put in, how the lists of Justices of the Peace and of Deputy Lieutenants were revised that those might continue who would support the Declaration of Liberty, how the Universities were dealt with, and the Bishops who would not read the Declaration. For the affair of the Fellows of Magdalen College we have an additional authority in the Diary[2] of Thomas Cartwright, Bishop of Chester.[3] Cartwright was one of

[1] Evelyn, February 14, 1685. [2] Publ. Camden Soc., 1843.

[3] Antony Wood says of him: "This Bishop, making it to be his sole endeavour to be gracious with the then great and leading men, and to show himself in all public assemblies, particularly in those wherein Roman Catholic Bishops were consecrated, he gained the ill will so much of the sons of the Church of England that when the Prince of Aurange made his expedition . . . he withdrew himself in private . . . and in disguise fled into France."

Burnet says of him: "He was a man of good capacity and had made some progress in learning. He was ambitious and servile, cruel and boisterous. . . . He set himself to raise the King's authority above law. . . ."

The Diary (1686-1687) certainly gives the impression of being written by a servile and ambitious man, with Romish and autocratic tendencies.

the Commissioners appointed to deal with the matter, and though the Diary consists almost entirely of brief notices of visits to and from great persons, of dinners eaten and letters written, of lists of persons ordained priests and deacons, its dulness is relieved by a description of the scene in Magdalen Hall, where the Commissioners were sitting.

THE REVOLUTION

James's policy compelled the nation to choose between loyalty to the Crown and loyalty to the Church, and the nation decided to desert temporarily the former in order that the latter might be permanently secured. Events moved rapidly. On August 10, 1688, Dr. Tenison, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, told Evelyn[1] that "there would suddenly be some great thing discovered." By November 5 the "great thing" had occurred, and the Prince of Orange had landed at Torbay.

THE EARL OF AILESBURY

Of the course and main events of the Revolution we have an account in Evelyn, Reresby, and Bramston, and at this period the Earl of Ailesbury's *Memoirs* are especially remarkable for the detailed and graphic account which they give of James's flight. Ailesbury endured much for James's sake, and it shows how thoroughly the King had alienated himself from public sympathy that such a loyal man

[1] *Diary*, August 10.

as this Earl could not blind himself to his master's folly. "My private sentiments," he says, "at that time and the same to this hour were thus: if the King can dispense with the laws at his pleasure, Westminster Hall may be shut up and the Statute book burnt."[1] What would have happened had James resisted it is impossible to say, but many of his friends and most competent advisers were against his flight. Lord Clarendon says: "His enemies wished he would be gone . . . his friends feared it."[2] Ailesbury implored James to make a stand either in Nottingham or Scotland, but James would not, and gave as the reason for his flight the danger to his person. "If I do not retire I shall certainly be sent to the Tower, and no King ever went out of that place but to his grave. . . . I declare to you that I retire for the security of my person, and I shall always be in readiness to return when my subjects' eyes may be opened."[3]

When James was seized by the fishermen at the Isle of Sheppey, Ailesbury was appointed to go to the King at Faversham and bring him back to Whitehall. He set out on "such a night as was hardly known for rain, wind, and darkness." The country-side was in a great state of fear and agitation, a rumour being abroad that Irish Papists were devastating the land. "When I came to Rochester Bridge I found many workmen beginning to cut

[1] *Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 151.
[2] Diary in vol. ii. of *Correspondence*. Edited by S. W. Singer, 1828.
[3] Ailesbury's *Memoirs*, p. 224.

down the wooden arch. I, asking them for what reason, they answered surlily, to hinder the Irish Papists from cutting their throats, for that all Dartford was on fire, and the streets ran with blood." "In passing through Chatham and Sittingbourne," too, "the women were crying at their doors . . . with their children by them, choosing rather to be murthered there than in their beds."[1] Ailesbury found the King "sitting in a great chair, his hat on, and his beard being much grown. . . . He took me to the window with an air of displeasure—indeed, quite contrary to what I expected—and said: 'You were all kings when I left London.' I could not dissemble, but spoke my mind in these terms: 'Sir, I expected another sort of welcome after the great dangers I ran last night by repairing to you. . . .'" "The room," the narrative proceeds, "was filled with men, women, children, and talking as if they had been at a market. Dinner being ready, I asked him if he would be served with ceremony. He said, 'Yes.' . . . I observed his shoulders moved much: I asked him if he was indisposed. He told me, 'No, but I hope you can give me a clean shirt.'" James entered London amid considerable rejoicing, which put some heart into him, but when ordered to retire to some dwelling outside London he decided on a final flight. Ailesbury accompanied him to Rochester in one of the royal coaches, and gives the following curious incident of the journey: "I endeavoured to sleep, but was soon awakened by the

[1] Ailesbury's *Memoirs*, p. 204.

King's coachman's bloody oaths. . . . He begged my pardon and promised fair, but very soon after I was awakened again out of a little slumber by that man's repeated oaths and whipping his horses, crying out, 'God damn Father Petres!' I said to him: 'Dixie, what harm hath he done you?' 'Damn him!' he replied again; 'but for him we had not been here!'"[1] Ailesbury further gives us an account of the Jacobite agitations which followed William's succession. His comments on that party explain why their efforts at a Restoration were so abortive. He "knew but too well the babbling spirit of the greater part of the Jacobites, and, which was worse if possible, their envious temper."[2] Again, he says: "I would not give a shilling for all the scribbling Jacobites wrote to the Court of St. Germains, for if twenty wrote, as many had different notions." And once more: "The party called Jacobites could never be quiet, and so flashy that if they did but dream that King James was coming over, they imagined it when they awakened."[3] Ailesbury saw the futility of attempting a restoration by means of foreign arms, "which in good English would be termed conquest." He held it as a "settled maxim" that James could not recover the throne save with a superior fleet and competent army of his own.

[1] Ailesbury's *Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 212.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 291.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 344.

WILLIAM AND MARY

In the meanwhile, William and Mary had ascended the throne. In his Diary,[1] Henry Sidney mentions that "Dr. Ken was with me. I find he is horribly unsatisfied with the Prince[2] and thinks that he is not kind to his wife; he is resolved to speak with him, though he kicks him out of doors."

MARY'S *MEMOIRS*

Whatever impression William's coldness may have given to others, or whatever his early feelings towards his wife may have been, Mary's *Memoirs*[3] clearly show that at a later time, at any rate, there was a deep, mutual affection between husband and wife. The Queen writes of her arrival in England: "I had a joy greater than can be expressed to come to the Prince, but I found him in a very ill condition as to his health, he had a violent cough upon him and was grown extremely lean. . . . We both shed tears of joy to meet, and of sorrow for meeting in England, both wishing it might have been in Holland, both bewailing the loss of the liberty we had left behind and were sensible we should never enjoy here." On February 21, 1689, Evelyn writes: "It was believed that both, especially the Princess, would have showed some (seeming) reluctance at least, of assuming her father's Crown . . . but nothing of all this appeared;

[1] March 31, 1680, vol. ii., p. 19.
[2] *I.e.*, Prince of Orange.
[3] *Memoirs*, 1689-1693. Edited by R. Doebner, Leipzig and London, 1886.

she came to Whitehall laughing and jolly, as to a wedding so as to seem quite transported. . . . This carriage was censured by many. She seems to be of a good nature, and that she takes nothing to heart." The excuse and explanation of this is found in the *Memoirs:* "The next day after I came we were proclaimed and the government put wholly in the Prince's hand. This pleased me extremely, but many would not believe it so that I was fain to force myself to more mirth than became me at that time, and was by many interpreted as ill-nature, pride, and the great delight I had to be queen. . . . My heart is not made for a kingdom and my inclination leads me to a retired quiet life so that I have need of all the resignation and self-denial in the world to bear with such a condition as I am now in." When William went over to Ireland Mary was left in control, and her description of her situation throws some light on the men of the time: "I found myself now at Whitehall as in a new world, deprived of all that was dear to me in the person of my husband, left among those that were perfect strangers to me: my sister[1] of a humour so reserved, I could have little comfort from her; the Great Council of a strange composition, the Cabinet Council not much better. Lord President[2] was the person the King had particularly recommended to me, and he was one to whom I must ever own great obligations, yet of a temper I can never like. Lord Stuart the King had likewise recommended as one might be

[1] *I.e.*, Anne. [2] *I.e.*, Danby.

trusted and must be complimented, but he I found weacke and obstinate, made a meer tool by a party; Lord Chamberlain to lazy to give himself the trouble of business, so of little use; Lord Pembroke is as mad as most of his family, tho' very good-natured, and a man of honour. . . . Lord Nottingham was suspected by most as not true to the government. . . . The King believed him an honest man, but he was thought to violent for his party. Lord Monmouth is mad and his wife, who is mader, governs him. . . . I will say nothing of Lord Marlborough, because 'tis he I could say most of and can never deserve either trust or esteem. . . ."

Mary's position was indeed hard, surrounded by such men; she had to face the danger of invasion, the lack of money, and the probability of a rising. But she had her recompense when William returned, and she was able to write: "My husband was satisfied and told me he was much pleased with my behaviour."

MEMOIRS AS AUTHORITIES FOR MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

So far nothing has been said about the light which memoirs throw upon contemporary social manners and customs. Yet it is in this respect that they are, perhaps, least fallible. It is difficult to give any quotations which directly illustrate their value as a source of knowledge on social matters, for a memoir-writer would naturally not describe society of a set purpose. The knowledge they convey is

rather given indirectly by a hundred incidental remarks, by the atmosphere of old time which they raise about the reader. But the Diaries of Evelyn and Pepys are remarkable and famous for the extraordinary amount of light which they throw on contemporary society. Evelyn, for instance, went seldom to the theatre, "as they were abused to an atheistical liberty: foul and indecent women now (and never till now) permitted to appear and act."[1] Pepys, on the other hand, went often, and tells us of the plays, the duels which arose at them, the oranges that were sucked there, and how on one occasion "a lady spit backward upon" him "by a mistake, but after seeing her to be a very pretty lady," he "was not troubled at it at all."[2] Evelyn tells us of bear-baiting and gaming; Pepys of street-fights, of combats between draymen and coachmen, even of pitched battles in the street between the trains of the rival Ambassadors of France and Spain. He tells us of the respect paid to the gentry: how, on their entering a country church, "the people all rose with so much reverence; and when the parson begins, he begins, 'Right Worshipful and dearly beloved.'"[3] And so forth.

Another work, the *Diary of Henry Teonge*,[4] gives us a picture of life at sea and the manners and customs of the Navy. He tells us of how merchant ships were treated if they failed to "put off their hats" (*i.e.*, lower their top-gallants) to a man-of-war,

[1] October 18, 1666. [2] January 28, 1661. [3] August 4, 1661.
[4] Teonge was a chaplain in the Navy. His Diary (published, 1825, by Charles Knight) was written on two voyages, 1675-1679.

of the fear of the pressgang, of punishments for stealing beef, etc.

CONCLUSION

The extracts in this essay are necessarily fragmentary in quotation and arbitrary in choice, and, taken from their context, much of their savour is lost; but the intention has been that they should illustrate the *kind* of information which is obtained from memoirs. That information is seen to consist chiefly of accounts of and commentaries on the political situation of the day; of estimates of personal characters; of sayings and incidents interesting, though not of great importance in history; of reflections upon affairs of the day; and of unconscious descriptions of society, of some particular events in which the author played a part. The amount of knowledge *un*derived from this species of writing is obviously enormous. If we think of history as a large mosaic work, the sources of information being the contributory pieces, the part of the pattern formed by memoirs is small in comparison with the whole. If we take even the seventeenth century, which, as has been said above, may be fairly considered as the golden age of memoir-writing, their contribution in quantity is comparatively slight. Of the secret history of those very secret times, of Charles's dealings with France, memoirs tell us nothing; all this has to be looked for in letters and despatches. Of the doings of Parliament, what memoirs tell us is little compared

with what we learn from the *Statutes of the Realm*, the *Journals* of both Houses, the *Calendar of State Papers*, and *Debates in the House of Commons*. Of contemporary opinion and thought we may derive, perhaps, as much knowledge from tracts, satires, poems, and avowedly partisan histories, as from memoirs. Collections of letters and MSS. also, though works less attractive in form, give as much information and cover more ground. Moreover, the authorship of memoirs has to be considered. Autobiographies were usually written late in life: Sir John Bramston wrote his when he was of the age of seventy; the Earl of Ailesbury, again, wrote his *Memoirs* in his declining years, and, as he expressly tells us, entirely from memory, without the aid of any notes. Diaries, though written near the time of the doings which they record, are compilations of unconsidered entries, often inaccurate even in chronology, as when Evelyn makes James II. return to London twice after his flight.

But the great value of memoirs is the spirit of life which they carry with them. The exactitude of a textbook, the balanced narrative of later writers, can never quicken history as does the reading of a contemporary account, faulty though it may be in particulars, and incomplete in generalities. Contemporary correspondence is of the species of memoirs, but in letters the sequence of narration is broken and the topics disconnected. In modern times it is inevitable that memoirs should have fallen in the estimation of the historian. At all times there

have been two kinds of historical writing and two tastes for historical reading. As the Duchess of Newcastle,[1] writing in the seventeenth century, expressed it: "There are those who prefer historians who keep 'close to the Truth of their narrations,' and there are those who prefer 'elegant' histories which are often but 'pleasant Romances.'" But it is only comparatively recently, for a century at most,[2] since the serious writer or reader of history has had to take up the burden which science has laid upon him. For the meaning of the application of science to history is that the historian has to bear a burden of labour and judgment. He can no longer accept what pleases his prejudice or appeals to his artistic taste; he has to search laboriously for truth; he has to sift evidence incessantly, and be infinitely critical. He can no longer, as once upon a time, greet the memoir-writer as one might a traveller who has come from lands where no man has been before. He has to adopt an attitude of wary scepticism, and, if he is faithful to truth, he has to reject much and rely upon more infallible sources of evidence. "As that oil is adjudged the best that hath no taste at all, so that historian is preferred who hath the least tang of partial reflections," wrote Thomas Fuller.[3] To modern historians memoirs are dangerously flavoured, yet what

[1] Preface to *Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle*, by Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle.

[2] That is, if we take Niebuhr as the pioneer of "scientific" history.

[3] Dedication of book x. of his *Church History*.

value they have must be recognized. Macaulay once dreamed that his niece had forged *Pepys's Diary*, and in consequence he was in the "greatest dismay."[1] Were the species of memoirs to vanish or be proved all forgeries, the greatest perturbation would follow in the mind of even the most exacting scientific historian. What we think of an epoch is perhaps more than we realize, determined by what an epoch thought of itself; and what an epoch thought of itself is best learnt from the private reflections of men whose position and ability made them competent observers. Scientists are able to form the elements of life, but they cannot give to them that energy and force without which they still remain a mere chemical concoction. The historian can reconstruct the past, but his art should also enable him to make it live again. Time cannot dull memoirs; with their aid we can see and hear past times in their own fresh, vital atmosphere; should anyone, underrating somewhat the amount of actual fact to be found in them, say that, in the face of the mass of more reliable and comprehensive evidence, memoirs as a source of history are superfluous, we might comment in the words of Voltaire: "The superfluous, a very necessary thing."[2]

[1] *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, vol. ii., p 428, by Sir G. O. Trevelyan, 1878.
[2] *Le Mondain*, line 21.

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